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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0804
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
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RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY ASMARA 0169
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 0050
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 1226
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0401
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 0903
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA 0557
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH 0230
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 002319

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/ARP, AF/SPG, AF/E

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YE, EG

SUBJECT: EGYPT ORGANIZING REGIONAL ANTI-PIRACY EFFORTS

REF: CAIRO 859

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(SBU) Ahmed Abu Zeid, Egyptian MFA Cabinet Advisor on African Affairs, on November 5 told us that the Egyptian MFA will host a one-day, high-level conference of "Arab Red Sea states" to discuss piracy in the Red Sea. Abu Zeid said the conference, scheduled for November 20, is an Egyptian initiative and a follow-up to the Arab League Peace & Security council meeting on piracy that was held on November 14. Egypt asked Yemen to co-chair the conference and invited officials from the Arab countries of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Djibouti. Egypt also asked officials from Eritrea and Somalia to attend as "observers" because piracy also affects these "non-Arab countries".

2.(C) Abu Zeid informed us the conference will consist of five sessions. The first session will discuss the phenomena of piracy and address its motivation and logistics. Subsequent sessions will deal with the legal and political aspects of piracy, economic and security concerns, current regional and international efforts against piracy. The conference will conclude with a session on cooperative efforts and recommendations to address piracy in the Red Sea area. According to Abu Zeid, the goal of the conference is to condemn piracy, and develop a coordinated approach to prevent piracy from occurring in the Red Sea.

13. (C) Comment: It is out of character for the Government of Egypt (GoE) to take the lead on the piracy issue. In April, Abu Zeid told us anti-piracy efforts were not necessary in the Red Sea, and he expressed concern that anti-piracy efforts would violate the sovereignty of regional countries' waters. However, the GOE now appears to view piracy as a direct threat to its Suez Canal tariff receipts and its economy. As a result, Egypt is willing to risk taking the lead on this issue.

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